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T H E D E F E N C E
OF THE
Rev. REGINALD BLIGH,
Of Queen's College, Cambridge, A. B.

AGAINST THE
PRESIDENT and FELLOWS of that SOCIETY,

Who rejected him as an improper Person for a Fellow on the 12th of *January*, 1780, upon the pretence of his want of sufficient Learning to qualify him for that Station,—designed to clear him from the unjust Suspicions of his Friends, and the malevolent Insinuations and Aspersions of his Enemies; which this Event has naturally brought upon him.

Mr. BLIGH would not presume to address the Public on the Hardship of his Case, was he the only Person likely to suffer from the Iniquity and Injustice of his Foes. *This Publication contains a most flagrant Instance of Knavery and Villainy; by which Mankind in general is injured: To expose it therefore is a subject of General Concern. And it may serve as a Warning to the Fellows of Queen's College, and as a Caution to those who might be inclined to enter into that Society with Mr. BLIGH's Views and Expectations.*

My Tables;—meet it is I set it down
That one may smile and smile and be a Villain.

SHAKESPEARE.

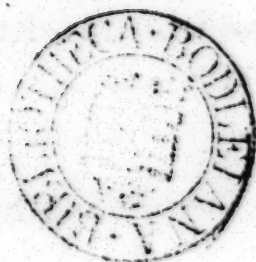
Isaac the Weaver hath done me much Evil:
The Lord reward him according to his Works.

St. PAUL.

N. B. This Defence hath been laid before the Person against whom it is principally intended; and communicated to the rest of the Fellows; and the Facts therein stated were not denied. At the earnest Desire of one of the Fellows, a Circumstance, which reflected on the Character of the President, has been expunged.

L O N D O N :

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ADVERTISEMENT.

ON the 21st of June last Mr. Bligh sent Mr. Milner a copy of what is set forth in this publication, together with the following address :

S I R,

Lynn, June 21, 1780.

I do not imagine that you suppose I should set down quietly with ruin and loss of character, the natural consequence of the ill treatment I met with from Queen's College, under your direction, at Christmas last. You will not therefore be surprised, when you find that I intend to vindicate myself from unjust suspicions and malevolent insinuations, and to endeavour to avert that calamity which you designed for me.

The inclosed sheets contain the substance, and perhaps the exact copy of what I am going to lay before the world: the alterations and additions (if any) will not be material. I have sent you this copy that you may make your objections if it should not contain the truth, or if I should have been mistaken in any of the facts therein stated.

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I have

I have not vanity enough to think that this pamphlet will have so much effect, as to create the least uneasiness to you, the Master, or any one that belongs to the College; nor do I mean to publish it with that design. My own character is the only object I have in view; and if I do but re-establish that, I shall be content.

If you wish to have any amendments made, I beg you would answer me speedily, as I purpose to print the same forthwith.

I am, SIR,

Your humble servant,

REGINALD BLIGH.

To this Letter Mr. Bligh received no answer from Mr. Milner: one of the fellows however did write to him, desiring him to suppress some particular lines, which have been expunged; as mentioned in the title-page.

A N
A D D R E S S
FROM THE
Rev. REGINALD BLIGH
To the P U B L I C.

IT is a melancholy and disagreeable business, especially to those who are sufferers by the truth of it, to take notice how very few exceptions there are to the following observation: "That the man who rises from a mean to a considerable state, is always overbearing and oppressive, is always fond of shewing his power and authority; the change of his situation changes his brains; and though in his primitive condition he was, and in that condition might have continued an honest and respectable man, yet being exalted far above what he could ever expect or think, he becomes too big for himself; his consequence bursts him, and those who are beneath him are sure to feel the effects of it."

I thought it necessary to premise this, that the Public being informed of Mr. Milner's
rise.

rise from the * loom to a college, and from being a ragged fizar, to be a leading man in a university, and to have gained by his cunning the entire disposal of the heart of so great a personage as the master of a college, they might not be surpris'd at the usage I have met with from him, though it must otherwise seem unaccountable.

I am aware that the mention of Mr. Milner's former low condition will be looked upon as an illiberal reflection; and so it might justly, if I meant it as any reflection at all, which I do not: so far from it, my opinion is, that provided a man, who rises in the world, behaves properly in a high station, his honour increases as well in proportion to his former obscurity as to his present dignity; since he must have had the more merit to emerge from his meanness and surmount those difficulties, which nature by his birth had thrown in his way.

It is therefore to my great sorrow that I am compelled to say, that the foregoing observation is verified in the character of Mr. Milner, to whose former ignobleness of situation I am obliged to recur, in order to reconcile an illiberality of sentiment in a man who has had opportunity and incitements to imbibe more honest and generous ideas. The Gaul in policy, and the Hollander in traffic, could not have used more knavish and under-

* Before he came to College he served an apprenticeship to a weaver in Yorkshire.

hand tricks to deceive and overreach, than this quondam weaver has practised to defraud an unsuspecting man of his just and reasonable expectations. It is a poor consolation to me as an individual, but I must endeavour to make it one as it extends to the public (whom I heartily congratulate) that the woollen trade has lost one unworthy member; and though it fell to my share to suffer severely on account of his being introduced where I was afterwards unhappily concerned, yet I have the pleasure of reflecting, that mankind is in less danger of being imposed upon in the purchase of a furtout or a suit of forest cloth. Mr. Milner would have been an eminent man in any profession; he would have been as capital a weaver as he is a mathematician; perhaps he would have connected weaving and mathematics, and proved from mathematical authority Yorkshire drab to be preferable to superfine; he would have demonstrated that engrossing, forestalling, and lying, were only taking fair occasions, and that the national, nay even the interest of the individual would be promoted, if a man gave three pounds for a coat, which he might buy for forty shillings.

Before I proceed in my narrative of the injuries and oppressions I have experienced from the gentleman abovenamed, it may not be improper to give some account of the expectation and pretensions I had of succeeding to a fellowship of Queen's College.

From my earliest youth I was indulged by
my

my friends in my inclination to qualify myself for holy orders. I had the misfortune to lose my parents, whom I expected to defray my expences at the university, before I became a Member of Queen's College: I was not however dismayed in the pursuit of an university education, which I resolved to obtain. Before I entered myself at Cambridge I taught the classics for some years with reputation and success. I brought a pupil with me, from the school where I was engaged, to Queen's College, whose father trusted him entirely to my care for several years before and since. This trust, though I was a very young man, I executed with fidelity, and to his satisfaction; and the improvement he made under my tuition alone (though Mr. Milner pretends I want scholarship to be admitted a fellow) I have reason to think he looked on with a malignant eye, he having no pupil of his own of the same standing that could come any way in competition with him. I applied the profits of my industry, and the small share of property left me on the death of my parents, who were rich only in content and a numerous family, to discharge the expences I necessarily incurred at college. These I have discharged justly and honestly.

On my admission into college, and in the progress of my studies there, I had uniformly the approbation and encouragement of the late Mr. Hughes, whose memory I shall ever honour; and when I applied to the late Bishop

Bishop of London for orders, who objected to me because I wanted a few months of the age to which he had confined himself for the admission of candidates for ordination, Mr. Hughes was pleased to say, that my age would have been no objection, if the Bishop had known my character and abilities from his own observation: I hope ever to justify the opinion that so learned and honest a man entertained of me. I thank God that my moral and religious character, which, I trust, will ever remain pure and unsullied, has hitherto brought no disgrace upon my sacred office; in doing the duties of which I have frequently administered to Mr. Milner's laziness or convenience. This I did freely and willingly; and in all things, where I could oblige Mr. Milner or serve him, I shewed my readiness to do so. I should by these means have preserved him, I believe, negatively my friend (for cordially he never can be any man's*) and no doubt have succeeded

* The whole world, I am sure, will be of the same opinion, when acquainted with his behaviour in the following instance: A gentleman furnished his brother with money to set him up in a school, and took *him* into his house from the weaving shop, and boarded him and educated him *gratis*, and afterwards assisted him with money at the university. It happened that this same gentleman's son, who was bedfellow to Mr. Milner, while he was at his father's house, came to the university at the time Mr. Milner became a great man there: and such was his gratitude to his patron and benefactor, such were the returns he made to the author and founder of his own and his brother's greatness, that he took so little notice of this his son, as not even to speak to him when he met him in the street.

in my wishes and expectations, but for a circumstance which I have presently to mention, and through which he became rancourously my enemy. That this circumstance ever happened I most heartily regret; but I reflect with pleasure, that I comforted a young man deeply afflicted, and perhaps saved him from self-destruction, when he lay under a punishment certainly not unmerited, but which I dared to censure as severer than had been inflicted on others in the same case.

From my first entrance into college as an undergraduate, I took care that no part of my behaviour should be such as my most inveterate enemy might dare to condemn; and I applied myself with all diligence to such studies as were necessary towards qualifying me for a fellow. I am far from thinking my abilities of the first rate, or that I have a genius highly turned for algebra or the mathematics; but I may venture to say, that neither my natural abilities for, nor my application to improve myself in any of these sciences, would suffer by comparison with the majority of the fellows of Queen's College. If nothing less than such a consummate genius as Mr. Milner's, added to equal application, would ensure a fellowship, I acknowledge that I ought to submit in silence—I should despair of obtaining it: but the mortification is aggravated beyond example, for a man of no despicable degree of knowledge to be rejected on account of his want of learning,

earning, by a majority influenced by Mr. Milner, and composed of the dullest and most illiterate of the society. In short, I had every reason to suppose I should make my election sure, and if the rulers of the college had not been possessed of an evil and malicious spirit, or had they had the least portion of that Divine Justice, to which they daily pray, I may venture to affirm the impossibility of my failing of success.

I now proceed to relate the unjust treatment and the unfair practices I experienced from my adversary: in doing which, I shall exhibit the heart of a man excited to malice by the most trifling of causes; and pursuing his enmity with all the inveteracy that hell could furnish, at the same time masking his hatred under the shew of perfect friendship; pretending good will towards me, and a desire of helping me forward, at the same time tampering with the examiner and judge of my productions and qualifications, whose character I shall have occasion to speak of, to depreciate and run me down; and not succeeding therein intirely to his wish, afterwards employing his power and influence to prejudice the college against me.

The circumstance, to which I just now alluded, is simply as follows: some few weeks before I took my degree, the master and three or four fellows of Queen's College rusticated an undergraduate for coming to chapel intoxicated. The next day at dinner, as was
natural

natural, the discourse turned upon this rustication.* I gave my opinion freely; I said that I knew Gilson (the person rusticated) to the botom of his heart, that I was sure he was not guilty of this misdemeanour thro' any vicious inclination, but that the unhappy frailty of his nature had been the occasion; I added (and with truth, which they dare not deny) that many irregularities of the same kind exactly, had been committed, without the least notice having been taken of them; and that when they had been noticed, they had always been punished in so slight a manner, as not to be compared with this. Knowing too, the temper and disposition of Mr. Gilson, and the distressed condition he was in, on account of this severe, and in some measure unjust sentence, and having reason to apprehend that fatal consequences might ensue, I expressed my fears on that head, and added, that if he should lay violent hands upon himself, I would not upon any consideration have to answer for what those men must, who were instrumental in his rustication. A little conceited Fellow, about fifteen years old, a Bishop's son, and a pupil of Mr. Milner, who sat at the table, took upon him to call me to account for my freedom of speech, and told me that I must not talk at that rate if I

* Rustication is expulsion for a limited time, at the expiration of which, the person rusticated is permitted to return to college. This punishment being the next to absolute expulsion, is esteemed a very great blot upon a man's character,

expected

expected a fellowship; to which I replied, that I would speak and do what was right, though I lost a bishopric by it. The young gentleman was silenced with this retort, but went and complained to his tutor that I had dared to censure a measure, of which, no doubt, he was the author and adviser, and had the audacity to answer with becoming spirit, a bishop's son. If Mr. Milner had urged the foregoing event, which he is ashamed to do, as the occasion of his enmity against me, I should have omitted the greatest part of what I have said, and what I shall say, appealing only to the public, and submitting it to their judgment how far I was culpable therein, and whether this my conduct merited such barbarous persecution.

I took much pains to reconcile Mr. Gilson to his fate, and to persuade him to retire to a farm-house, about six miles from Cambridge, for the time of his rustication, and at the expiration of it to return to college as tho' nothing had happened: with the best arguments I was master of, and by urging them continually for two days together, I at last prevailed upon him to take my advice. During this time I was every moment, that Mr. Gilson was alone, afraid that he would be guilty of self-destruction; and I could neither enjoy peace of mind or sleep till my persuasions had induced him to submit patiently to his destined punishment; and if what I feared had been the consequence, of his having been left to himself, by thinking that I might have
saved

saved him, I should have been uneasy at the recollection of it all my life. And I cannot help declaring further, that should the same scene be acted over again, and were I sure that the loss not only of a fellowship, but of every other prospect of success in life with it must follow, I could not refrain from performing the same friendly part.

Mr. Milner's being acquainted with my discourse and behaviour upon this event is the chief foundation of my disappointment; for being an artful and discerning man, he began to suspect that I was not a manageable person; and fearing that he might not be able to mould me to his purpose,* he resolved to prevent my success, if it could be effected by justice or injustice. How far Mr. Milner may be justified by his own conscience, and the opinion of honest men, supposing this to be the occasion of his behaviour, which admits not of supposition, it will be superfluous and unnecessary to discuss. Therefore, laying aside this subject, I shall come to the material point, and defend myself, where my adversary endeavours, with too much success, to infuse his venomous bane to deprive me of a livelihood and my reputation.

When I solicited Mr. Milner for his friendship, he told me that my success in getting for a fellowship would be a matter of certainty, and that no plea could be made for rejecting me, had I shewn sufficient learning at the time

*Mr. Milner has an eye to the mastership, which upon a vacancy is filled by the votes of the fellows.

I took my degree to qualify myself for that station. As this was the only objection that could be made against me, and as this my want of learning kept me back from the honour and emoluments of a fellowship, I have only to vindicate myself from the subsequent aspersions of my enemies, and suspicions of my friends, by defying Mr. Milner and his twin-brother in iniquity, to shew any other reason for their proceedings; and by evincing to every reader's satisfaction the unreasonableness of the imputation, which, unfortunately for me, succeeded to the wish of my enemy.

This I hope to do by shewing in how unfair a manner I was treated, thro' the iniquitous practices of Mr. Milner, in going thro' the exercises and examinations preparatory to taking my degree; and by giving the public some notion of the profound erudition of the president of Queen's College, and that of his son (who succeeded in his election at the time I was rejected), thereby exhibiting to the world subject-matter to judge how learned it is requisite for a fellow of that society to be.

It is a custom in the university, some time within the year of taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts, to make a Latin oration (stiled a Thesis), which is followed with disputing on three different subjects in the same language, against as many opponents: the thesis, together with the disputation is called an Act: this performance is carried on under the direction

rection and judgement of a Master of Arts, who is called a Moderator. At the dismissal of the disputants, the Moderator gives his opinion on their merits. The speech or thesis, which was spoken by me on this occasion was afterwards spoken by Mr. Joseph Plumptre, son to the president of Queen's College, and elected Fellow in January last, as before-mentioned. This thesis was read by both, before the same moderator, Mr. Mounsey. It would not perhaps have been surprizing, had the moderator complimented the performance, when it came from me, and passed it by unnoticed when it came afterwards from Mr. Plumptre; as I had a double advantage over him in the delivery of it, it being my own composition, and spoken by me first. The contrary of this happened: I spoke it without the least compliment; Mr. Plumptre received for it the highest token of applause. I ask any unprejudiced Person whether a clearer fact of the injustice of a moderator can possibly be adduced? I hope too, that the reader anticipates me in observing that if I had not gained some credit in the college, Mr. Plumptre would not have applied to me to assist him with a thesis. His application, and my assistance are indeed unfortunate circumstances, as I was marked out by Mr. Milner to be hunted down, and Mr. Plumptre's father was the old hound whom this fawning mungrel so industriously and unduly influenced to raise the cry against me. Mr. Milner perhaps may say, "let the hunted deer go weep," but

but let him be told, that the deer will not weep in secret : the world shall know in how foul a manner the chace was conducted, that no poor buck may hereafter batten on Queen's Moor, to become game for a poaching pack as I did, when so many flowery fields and meadows tempt him to feed pleasantly.

But to return from this digression ; if Mr. Mounsey should advance that Mr. Plumptre's dignity of speech, his judicious method in modulating his voice, his emphatical pronunciation, together with his other oratorical faculties, gave this speech beauties and excellencies, which were not to be discovered from my lame and inanimate reading.—No one acquainted with the parties will hesitate to pronounce Mr. Mounsey's ear as bad as his heart. If the oratory of Mr. Joe bears any resemblance to that of Demosthenes, it must be when he had pebbles in his mouth. Any one that knows him not, if he has ever heard a vile scraper endeavouring to put a vile fiddle in tune, may form an idea of the divine graces of his utterance, and the celestial music of his tongue ; and it would be no disparagement to his voice, were I to add, that a few years hence, when he should be delivering out the word of truth, with all the authority and dignity of heaven's ambassador, he will be more like a bumble bee buzzing in a bottle. Admitting however his delivery of the thesis to be actually preferable to mine, the matter, and not the manner, is what a moderator should attend to : if it had intrinsically merit,

it should have received commendation; this will bear no contradiction. Therefore we cannot account otherwise for the difference in Mr. Mounsey's opinion respecting it, than by attributing it to a cause, of which any man, who regarded the reputation of being esteemed honest, would be heartily ashamed: Mr. Milner was the main spring, by employing his friend Mounsey to second his dishonourable purpose of decrying my qualifications and abilities as before observed.

I desire the reader to take notice, that I do not mean to say, nor do I think that the Thesis was excellent; but it was commended as such in the hands of Mr. Plumptre. Be it an oration for which a school boy ought to be flogged: let the speech as well as *the speaker* deserve to be consigned to the hands of the common executioner, for a libel upon genius, common sense, and the powers of oratory: This, since commendation followed, would only argue so much the more in my favour, and shew the world, that Joseph's success was as fixed and predetermined as my defeat.

At the time gentlemen take their degrees, they are disregarded or complimented in the same manner; the latter of which is called "the getting an honour." Supposing then that upon our examination for our degrees, Mr. Plumptre and I had shewn equal abilities and equal learning; so that it would be impossible to judge whose merit ought to have the preference—after the preceding instance

stance of partiality, since the disposal of the honours was in the power of the same Mr. Mounsey, and another intimate of Mr. Milner—it will not be a difficult matter for the world to determine what would be the event.

Previous to the examination of the moderators, it is usual for the gentlemen to pass an examination under the tutors of the Colleges to which they respectively belong: I was accordingly examined with four others by Mr. Jordan, tutor of Queen's, a gentleman universally allowed to be as competent a judge, and as candid and fair as any in the university; before whom I shewed my knowledge of algebra to be superior to either of the four: from this, and my knowledge of other things, which I discovered before Mr. Jordan, I am sure, if he be asked, he will have honour enough to declare, that upon my application for a fellowship he had no reason to expect that I should be rejected for want of scholarship; and that I had an undeniable right to claim from the moderators, that approbation, which it is deemed necessary for a Fellow of Queen's college to have.

After this examination of Mr. Jordan; when the examination by the moderators in the senate-house came on, I had not only reason to suspect, but did suspect from the shuffling manner in which I was examined, that they had some design: They but seldom asked me a question; when they did, it was

so silly, that I was almost ashamed to answer it ; and if I answered any question put to another, they always shewed themselves displeased that I was able to do it. I was naturally mortified at being deprived of an opportunity of shewing what knowledge I had acquired, as I hoped in this examination to have proved that I had studied with some degree of proficiency. I was not vain enough to imagine, but that I should fall very short of obtaining the first honour ; yet was I almost certain of obtaining one much superior to what either the president or the majority of the fellows of Queen's College could fairly be entitled to. Upon enquiring the reason why I was treated with so little regard by the moderators, I found that they had been tampered with by Mr. Milner ; which occasioned me to tell my friend Mr. Baines, that I had nobody to rely on but him for having some kind of justice done me : for that Milner was my inveterate enemy, I hardly knew why, and would secretly do me all the mischief he could, either by himself or agents, though I was of the same college. Mr. Baines was amazed at the relation, and wished to prevent Mr. Milner from obtaining his ends ; which indeed was done so far that I did get an honour : but this honour being sufficient to qualify me for a fellow of Queen's College, Mr. Milner persuaded the fellows of that society to rejudge me, and I was pronounced, through his influence, unworthy

worthy of receiving what I obtained under so many disadvantages.

Notwithstanding all the reason Mr. Milner gave me to fear that his iniquity would be my ruin, he had the assurance and hypocrisy of heart, to shake hands with me at the time of examination, and to talk with me as if he meant to be my friend. And though he did to my own certain knowledge deprive me of that success, which I had a claim to, he went to an intimate acquaintance of mine, and before him gave his shoulders a shrug, and expressed great sorrow at my disappointment. But, though he behaved thus before me and my friend, before those who, as he thought, would not discover him, he congratulated himself upon his management; he exulted over my misfortune and triumphed in my distress. Good God! what a heart must that man have, who could carry all the outward appearance of good will towards the person, against whom he inwardly travailed with a dire and hellish plot; who could put on the mask of friendship to rob and murder in private!

In addition to what has been already related, I have divers circumstances to produce to defend myself against the evil consequences, which the unmerited malice of the president of Queen's College and Mr. Milner labours to bring on me: The opinions of Mr. Kepling of St. John's College, and Mr. Vince of Sidney, are at any time sufficient to evince to the world, that when I took
my

my degree, I was deserving of that honour, which is required by the society of Queen's College as a qualification for a Fellow; they avowed, and cannot retract, that my knowledge demanded that token of approbation from the university; and they could not be swayed by any sinister views; a regard for honesty must have made them speak, since they could have no interest in my success, and since I was examined by them at the particular request of my arch-enemy. Should the moderators say (as they did) that they are not to be governed by private opinions, if they cannot likewise make it appear that these gentlemen are incapable of judging, while they disallow *their* opinions, they must condemn their own honesty.

Mr. Hammond likewise, a Fellow of Queen's College, and perhaps as good a judge as Mr. Milner himself [to whom I communicated the questions and problems which had been set me in the senate-house, and the manner in which I answered and solved them] said, in these very words, "what Bligh has done clearly deserves an honour."

Another convincing proof, that carries every mark of satisfaction with it, that the objection made to me was only an artful scheme, plotted and contrived by my arch-enemy, at the instigation of the arch-enemy of mankind is, that Mr. Saunders, the pupil I alluded to before, whom I entered at Queen's, was always esteemed by the whole society

society (including Mr. Milner*) the best mathematician of his standing in that college: and Mr. Saunders will and must declare, that every thing he knew of that science he had imbibed from my repeated instructions and in no other way whatever.

After the examinations were finished in the senate-house, and it was reported that I had taken my degree without any honour, being excessively hurt that the plottings of my enemy should so far prevail, I hastily left college, with a design to expose, by a printed publication, the chicanery and rascality made use of in the distribution of the honours; to bring the honesty of Mr. Milner, and his confederates the moderators, before the tribunal of public justice; and to prove, as I trusted, incontestably, that the senate-house, at the time of examining the students for degrees is (what a mathematician of character and honour named it) *the focus of iniquity*.

This intention of mine was soon dropt, as a friend belonging to the university called on me in London about two days after I left college, and informed me, that he had seen my name in the list of those who had honours, which account was afterwards confirmed by my own sight.

This being the case, and having it very much at heart to live in peace and charity with all men, I resolved to forget all that

* I should have also included Dr. Plumtre: but to talk of his opinion, either with respect to mathematical or classical knowledge, would burlesque the whole pamphlet.

was past, and to take every opportunity to let my adversary see that I had no animosity towards him: by my shewing him by my behaviour that I was inclined to court his friendship, I was in hopes that he had relinquished all design of pursuing me further, and that I should actually make him my friend. To my sorrow I found in the conclusion, that I had flattered myself with a vain hope, for though his carriage towards me had all the appearance of amity, he laboured in thought how best to defeat my fair prospect of success, which he accomplished, not in a generous manner, by declaring openly that he meant to be my enemy, but by secretly undermining me.

As I had not revealed any the least of my hard usage, even to my dearest friends, I determined to let it all be buried in oblivion. I would have kept within my own breast all the unfair proceedings that were used to depreciate my abilities; I would have suffered my right of precedence to have been taken from me without a murmur, without a word of complaint or reproach against any man in the university, so as that the machinations of my enemy had not deprived me of the honour of a fellowship, which I had every reason to expect, and the profits, which on account of the expences I had incurred at the university, were become a necessary addition to my income: I can lay my hand upon my heart and say, that I would silently have submitted to the loss of my birth-right, provided the underhand practices

practices of my adversary had not stolen away the blessing also.

Two or three days before the election came on I waited on Mr. Milner in the most submissive and friendly manner, and requested him to give me instructions how to proceed in the business of being candidate for a fellowship; telling him at the same time, that if I omitted any thing, which might be construed into want of sufficient respect for the president and fellows, I should do it undesignedly, and through ignorance of the customs on such occasions; and as an imputation of that kind would hurt me very much, I had taken leave to apply to him, that, being guided by his directions, no unlucky accident might happen. I added, that it was my most earnest wish to conduct myself with proper deference to the president and fellows, and that I would go round and solicit their votes, were I not afraid of doing it prematurely, and so transgressing the usual form that had perhaps been hitherto constantly adhered to by my predecessors. Mr. Milner's reply was, that none of the society expected it, and that it would not be proper for me to ask votes till I should be first informed by Mr. Sharp (the butler of the college) when and how to go about it. After this I asked him, if he thought I should be fortunate; to which he answered, that he could not speak with certainty; that my behaviour had in every instance merited approbation, and that no one would pretend to make the least objection

tion to me on any other account but my want of abilities; I had not shewn sufficient knowledge when I took my degree: but for *that* my success would be infallible. He perceived that I was astonished at this expression, and therefore added, that he did not think the objection would be material; only it would be mentioned. The very worst of men are ashamed of their wickedness in the presence of those they injure. What a shew of fairness was here pretended! and how were my expectations flattered by a hypocritical knave, who was plotting to do me the most cruel injustice! I had not shewn sufficient learning he says; but why had I not shewn it? You had contrived, Isaac the weaver, that an opportunity should not be given me, of shewing what I knew before the moderators, and what I did shew before private examiners, you would not permit to receive that approbation, which they declared upon their honour that it deserved. Then he tells me, that he does not think the objection material—only it would be mentioned. I was to learn from another hand that the objection had been pre-determined to be made material.

The next day I applied to Mr. Charles Plumptre, nephew to the president, and a fellow of the college, with whom I had been pretty much acquainted, and told him that I was in distress, through my fears that the society would not deal fairly and honestly by me. Now it was that I perceived the diabolical scheme of Mr. Milner to blast my expectations

expectations had fatally succeeded: for upon this application to Mr. Plumptre he told me, that the president and fellows had determined that I had not shewn sufficient learning when I took my degree, and that I was therefore an improper person for a fellow of that society. I answered, that I thought I might safely challenge above half the present fellows on that score. He replied, that if *he* had done no better than I did, when he took his degree, though he was nephew to the president, he could not have been elected fellow; nor even his cousin Joe, though his son. And yet his cousin Joe could condescend to ask my assistance in a variety of instances, and particularly in the affair of the thesis beforementioned; after the recital of which I was so silently dismissed, and which was received with such high tokens of approbation from Joseph Plumptre by the same moderator Mr. Mounsey. I said I was cruelly used: Mr. Charles Plumptre said, *not by Queen's College, for that Mr. M—ns—y had been applied to for his opinion.* Thus it was allowed by Mr. Milner, Mr. Hammond, and Mr. Charles Plumptre, that they could see no objection to me; and yet they contrived to defraud me of my good name and my right, by *candidly* giving up their own judgment, and with that *honesty* and *impartiality*, with which they had always used me, they left the determination of my success to a man, who besides being an intimate of Mr. Milner, my inveterate enemy, is a most no-

torious rebel and blasphemmer; a man who makes no scruple of uttering publicly the most horrid treason and impiety; a man, who notwithstanding his duty as a clergyman, fellow and tutor of a college, and occupier of a public office in the university; notwithstanding his situation in life had obliged him at various times to swear allegiance, did, in the most open manner, harangue a mob of barge-men and the lowest class of the people of Cambridge against the being of a God, and in the most contumelious language abuse and execrate the King. *Haud ignota loquor.* Mr. M—ns—y for this behaviour was obliged to resign all his employments, and now holds his fellowship only, and scarcely did he escape expulsion.

I pause here to remark, that Mr. Plumptre says “ I was not cruelly used by Queen’s College, for that Mr. M—ns—y had been “ applied to for his opinion:” so that my election to a fellowship depended entirely upon the opinion of Mr. M—ns—y; and how honest and just an one he was likely to give, I leave to the judgment of any impartial person, after the strong facts against his character which have been just mentioned. Is it to be supposed that a man, who blasphemes his maker and disbelieves his being, would scruple to give such opinion as his friend and intimate should dictate? That it should guide Mr. Milner, through whose influence it was given, is not at all to be wondered at; but it seems strange that the president

dent and fellows should be so over-ruled: the latter I can in some measure excuse. Mr. Milner is a man of deserved reputation as a mathematician; his opinion therefore, were he to give it candidly and honestly, ought to have its due weight; and certainly both his and the president's recommendation or opposition to a candidate must turn the scale either for or against that candidate, with all those over whom they have influence, and also with those, who not constantly or frequently residing at college, can have little opportunity of deciding from their own observation: my ill success I attribute to this dishonest influence. Mr. M—ns—y gave his opinion, which was seconded by Mr. Milner, and supported by the president: *he* supported Mr. Milner in his assertion of my not having acquired sufficient knowledge to qualify me for a fellowship! Ye men of Cambridge of all degrees and offices, from the Chancellor to the Freshman, I call upon you to hear it and note it, while I repeat, that the Rev. Dr. Plumptre rejects a man, because he wants *sufficient learning* to become *member* of a society over which *he* *presides*. Ye men of Cambridge, *risum teneatis*! Laugh on, ye collegians; I would join your mirth, but the archers have grieved me sore: O Milner! Milner! thou Goliath of literature, thou hast knocked me down with a weaver's beam: thy Philistines shot at me while their arrows lasted and till their bows were weakened, and thou stoodst grinning by; but their

their force being expended, in came thy ponderous arm and felled me to the earth

Though the conduct of the president of Queen's College upon this occasion, in his application, through Mr. Milner, to the worthy Mr. M—ns—y for an opinion respecting me, which could only be intended to countenance the injustice of rejecting me as a Fellow, will find but little approbation, except from his own heart and conscience; yet his behaviour upon other occasions will meet with 'as few applauders. To mention one:—Mr. Poley was refused a fellowship in January 1777, upon Dr. Plumptre's assertions, that he was not a proper person to be elected: but at the next election the Doctor, to carry a particular point which he could not otherwise effect, became his friend, and Mr. Poley succeeded. If Mr. Poley was a proper person for a Fellow, he ought not to have been rejected at first; if an improper, he ought not to have been elected at all: whether therefore Mr. Poley was a proper or an improper person, the conduct of Dr. Plumptre is not to be justified. It is natural for indifferent people to argue thus on this occasion; but it is well known to all who are acquainted with the parties, that Dr. Plumptre, without assigning any reason, most cruelly withheld from Mr. Poley his just due, and that it was by mere compulsion that he afterwards acted with more honesty. The relation of this fact serves to shew, that no sense of justice
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or equity can weigh with Dr. Plumptre, when put in competition with other considerations, and that his unjustly seconding Mr. Milner's views, in opposition to me, is not a singular circumstance in his character.

Having given a fair account of the unjust proceedings made use of against me in going through my exercises and examinations, preparatory to taking my degree, and of a few of the iniquitous practices of my enemies; it remains that I furnish the public with some notion of the profound erudition of the president of Queen's College, and that of his son, that I may thereby exhibit to the world subject-matter to judge how learned it is requisite for a Fellow of that Society to be. Few words on this head will suffice.

With regard to the president, not many men in the university need any particular instance of his want of learning and ability; and to those who are unacquainted with him, to select one instance of his illiterateness, is as well as to select a thousand; this shall be done, not from the singularity of it, but from its notoriety.—In a speech, which his office of Vice-chancellor obliged him to *attempt to read**, he shewed in the face of the university, that he could not even read Latin so as to give the words their proper pronunciation, which gave occasion to some ingenious collegian to throw a few of those words, which he falsely pronounced, into a kind of

* He was obliged to borrow as well as his son Joe: the one is as capable of composing a speech as the other.

hexameter verse; whereby he has preserved a lasting memorial of the profound learning of Dr. Plumptre, and what qualifications are necessary for the President of Queen's College.—The verse runs thus,

“Rogerus immemor Robertum denotat hebētem,” wherein the reader will see that the Doctor pronounces short for long, and *vice versā*.

And it is a secret to no one who is acquainted with the son, that he is “a chip of the old Block;”^{*} and the public, who, on account of his success in the present case, shall come, big with expectation, to hear him shew forth his oratory from the pulpit, and to discourse with him upon subjects mathematical and divine, “will, no doubt, be astonished at his understanding and answers,” and be forced to declare, “that this man speaks so as man never yet spake.”

This being a true state of facts, wherein nothing is exaggerated, nothing set down in malice; but many things extenuated, and many totally concealed: it is submitted to the world in general, and to the university in particular, with what propriety the President of Queen's College could countenance the rejection of a man as Fellow of that society, for want of sufficient learning. If it had been a student who actually had appeared in some degree deficient, such an objection would have come with a very ill grace from a society who had such an *ignoramus* for their

^{*} An old proverb is here hazarded, because of the applicability of the word *Block*.

head; but I am willing to appeal to any impartial man in the university, or out of it, who is capable of examining and judging, whether I am really, and in truth, so deficient in point of knowledge, as to disqualify me from appearing among the Fellows of Queen's College; or, that I should disgrace their fraternity? in taking my degree, I have made it appear that I was treated in a scandalous manner; and after having obtained an honour under all disadvantages, that the honour was re-judged, and it was iniquitously pretended I did not deserve it.

I have now only to hope, that the disgrace and loss of character, intended for me, will fall on the head of my enemies; and that no worse effect will happen to me, than the loss of the profits and honour of a fellowship, which I have as much right to, as a legatee to his legacy, or an heir to his estate. And the president and fellows of Queen's College in withholding it from me, have been guilty of as great a crime, as that of burning or concealing a will, and thereby defrauding me of my inheritance, which will be made to appear more plainly, if possible, by a prosecution.

It is solely against my will and inclination that I make this defence. I not only wish that there had been no cause, but would also willingly have submitted to some inconveniences, rather than have troubled the world with a vindication of my own behaviour, and a conviction of the malice and oppression of

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my enemy: I could make allowances, and great ones for the president, with respect to introducing his son: the partiality and feelings of a father no one can be more ready to assent to, and excuse than myself; and however grievous and distressing it may appear to see a student taken from another college and preferred before me, an alien adopted to the exclusion of the right heir, whose behaviour (I appeal to the college in particular, and the university at large) was never once called in Question; however unjust and insulting such a piece of iniquity may look; still the filling up but two vacancies out of five is more enormous: I was set aside, not only to make room for the president's son, and another creature of his friend, counsellor and assistant, Mr. Milner, but also for the pitiful consideration of his profits and emoluments. The share of the vacancies, and the hopes that Mr. Milner conceived of a greater number of students, being induced by the open fellowships to enter into that college, which considerably augments his income as a tutor, carried with them such charms, that neither a sense of honour and justice, nor the fear of those reflections, which might be cast on his meanness and mercenary disposition, could sufficiently operate to deter him from practising upon the weakness and simplicity of the president, and by that means prevailing upon the whole society to commit so glaring an act of villainy.

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I confess, though I boast of much patience and philosophy, that this consideration wounds me deeply; and it is this which rouses me to make my defence: that the exclusion of me can answer no other end, but that infamous and illiberal one, the increase of the emoluments of my adversary.

But to trouble the public no further, I shall conclude with confidence, that the censure, which must fall somewhere on this event, will fall in the right place; and that the schemes of my enemy will prove abortive. I hope, that instead of securing to himself the mastership at the next vacancy, which is undoubtedly his aim; his mischievous practices and intentions will be discovered, and his favour abhorred, not only by the college and the university, but that he will also stink to all mankind. I hope that he will be deceived in his expectations of having a greater number of admissions, by contriving to keep the three fellowships open, though he cannot fail of receiving his share of the loaves and fishes which belong to them.

F I N I S.

